

Pufendorff-Dissertation upon the Druids — 1886

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A DISSERTATION

UPON

THE DRUIDS,

BY

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CHEMNITZ.



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Introduction.

 DIVINE Philosophy, as she has never been known to spurn with disdain any of her votaries, so hath she never entertained such a contempt for these cold northern climes and their inhabitants, however revolting may have been their barbarism, according to the unexaggerated declarations of old writers, that she could find it in her heart to drive them away with a frowning brow from the inner courts of her sanctuary. How many, on the contrary, do we not know whom she has admitted, if not farther than any of the Greeks and Romans, yet certainly as far as these, into her most secret recesses, and whom she has most heartily loved and nurtured !

For, that the northern nations have had their philosophers is a fact of which no one ought to doubt. Notable on this account among the Hyperboreans are the Arimphaci, whom Herodotus² appears to have called Agrippaci, of whom whom Pliny,³ Mela,⁴ and Solinus,⁵ speak. Notable among the Scythians are the Abū, of whom Nicolaus Damascenus in Stobæus,⁶ Strabo,⁶ and Alexander of Alexandro,⁷ speak. Notable among the Getæ are the Tarabosiesci, called by Jordanus⁸ the Zarabi Terei, of whom Dion Albertus Cranzius,⁹ and others speak. These, as nations, were all famous, and individuals of them were famous, or were, at least, well known by name, as philosophers. It is to be wished that a wider knowledge could be gained of their mode of life, of their manners, of their religious observances, and of their sayings and their doings, and then I make no doubt it would be seen that they either excelled all others, or at least could com-

¹Bk. iv. ²Bk. vi., c. 13. ³Bk. i., last ch.

⁴Cap. 27. ⁵Serm. 5, de Temper. ⁶Bk. vii.

⁷Gen. dier., bk. iv., c. 13. ⁸Bk. de reb. Getic.

⁹Svec., bk. ii., c. 55.

pare with them on equal terms. But with the scanty materials at our disposal we shall not be able to shed any light upon them. They remain, and will, perhaps, for ever remain, shrouded in night. More fortunate by far than these in this respect were the Druids, the Philosophers of the Celts, who found as the herald of their deeds no blind, hunger-pinched Homer (though Alexander envied Achilles for having had such a bard), but the highest dignitary himself in the leading province of Gaul, nay, a Roman Consul, and even the Roman Dictator, than whom the world contained at that time no personage more august. But if it be a great thing to be praised by one who is himself praised, as Nalvius makes Hector say, earning thereby the praise of Cicero,¹ then surely it must be a superlative distinction for them to have secured for their recorder and their historian a man of even more than regal dignity. Now, since the Druids by this circumstance alone are more fortunate than all others, it seemed

¹ See Cicero, *pro Arch.* and *Epist. ad Fam.* bk. v., Ep. 12. *Epist. ad Fam.*, bk. v., Ep. 12, and bk. xv., Ep. 6. *Tuscul.* *Disput.* iv.

good to us, while for a brief space roaming in freedom amid the groves of various writers, to make at this present time, late though it be, a collection of extracts from their works relating to this subject. And here I would express the hope that those who are distinguished for superior sagacity in antiquarian investigations, will kindly pardon us if we shall perchance stray from the right path, falling at times into error, by reason of the unrelieved darkness with which on various sides we are beset, especially since no writings, if we except Holy Scripture, can be found anywhere in the world whose author, if the matter be closely examined, has not shown himself to be of imperfect vision. Accordingly, without further preface we only add one word more—Farewell !





A Dissertation upon the Druids.

CHAPTER I.

The Druids. Origin of their name. Some derive it from *Druide*, others from *Darash*, others from *Druchtin* and from *Trutin*, others from *Trou*; *Pontanus*, whose opinion is adopted, from *Trywiis*.

 THE Druids then were the Priests, Philosophers and administrators of justice among the Britons, the Gauls and the Germans.

We say the Germans, for although the Germans had them not originally, though this is a view from which *Franciscus Irenicus*,¹ *Cluverius*,² *Schedius*,³ and a good many others dissent, going so far as to ascribe them just as much to the Germans as to the Gauls, (though they can easily

¹ Book ii., chap. 9, *German. Exegesos*.

² *Germ. Antiq. Book i., cap. 13, 22, 24.*

³ *Syng. ii., de Germ. disc. i.*

be refuted from Strabo,¹ Cæsar,² Diodorus Siculus,³ and Ammianus Marcellinus,⁴ yet in after times when the Gauls were driven from their old seats by the Emperors, Tiberius and Claudius, they not only received the Druids, but even retained them in their midst till their final disappearance ; but of this more hereafter.

Whence the Druids had their name is a point about which there are as many opinions as individuals. Johann Aventinus⁵ and Joh. Picardus Fontrerianus,⁶ suppose that they were named from their founder *Druyde* or *Dryius*, who is said by Berosus⁷ to have lived among the Celts, in the time of "Arius, the sixth king of the Babylonians, and to have been a man full of wisdom." Schedius⁸ would borrow the name from the Hebrew. "In the Rabbinical writings," he says, "there occurs *darash*, an exposition, the nominative plural of which *darashim* means a speech, and *darashin* a public speaker, but the root of each is *darash*, (he) sought, consulted, searched." Some, as Cluverius⁹ and

¹ Geogr. Book iv.

² Com. de Bell. Gall., Book vi. ³ Book v., Bibliot.

⁴ Rer. Gest., Book xv.

⁵ Annal. Bojor. Book., Book i.

⁶ De Celt paed., Vol. ii., p. 58.

⁷ Antiquit., Book v.

⁸ Syngr 2, c. 3. ⁹ Germ. Antiq., Book i, c. 74.

Vossius¹ attest, would identify the name with a word that is read in the old speech of Germany, **druthin**, **druchtin** and **drughtin**, or **Druchtin** and **Drugthin**, and which in their dialect signifies a lord. It confirms this view that Ofridus, an old writer in the Frankish tongue, not unfrequently uses this word, as in his version of the Lord's Prayer which is extant in the works of the famous Jesuit, Isaac Pontanus:² **Fater unser quato bist drutbim thu gimuato, in bimilon jo bober Vuibsi Ramo tbiner.** Upon this Pontanus remarks that *Druchtin* is as it were *trunstin*, his proof being that the word is sometimes used for God himself, whence, in the same Ofridus, the expression **druthines haus**, signifies God's house, and the Icelanders by the word **druthim** indicate the Deity, even at the present day. Nay more, that word is to be found in the *Harmony of the Gospels* of Syrus Tatianus, written in the very oldest Germanic idiom—a work of which the famous Vulcanius had a copy. For that author says of John the Baptist: “**Wer ist warlich mein Herr sora thruthine;**” and shortly after, “**Inti Manege Israheles barno giberbitu thruthine Gote iro,**” &c. An opinion some-

¹ *Idolat.*, Book i., c. 35.

² *Orig. Franc.*, Book vi., p. 586.

what, but not materially, different, was held by a theologian of highest renown in days gone by, Matth. Flacius Illyricus,¹ who thinks that the Druids were so named as being *Trutes*, that is, divines and revealers of the Deity, because, to wit, in the old tongue of the Germans also *Trutis* signified God. Now this word seems to have come down to the Germans and Britons from the common *dru*, or *Trou*, or *Trau* (whence these names of women Gariotruda, Gertrandte, Ariotruda, Erstrandte), so that the *Trutis* would thus be spoken of as being faithful to God, a name extremely appropriate to priests who were in the habit of celebrating the mysteries and secret religious rites. The famous Jesuit, Is. Pontanus,² thinks that the name of Druids has been taken from the British tongue, to wit, from the two words *Try*, a tree, and *wiis*, a sage, a philosopher, so that they have thus obtained their name from their being sylvan philosophers, philosophers of the grove, *waldeweis*, as we say in Germany, because, as all agree, they cultivated philosophy under oaks and other trees. Where opinions are so conflicting we run a near risk of being charged with shuffling, for this, that, and the other writer appear to say so much to the purpose that we can

¹ In praefat. in Otridi Evangel.

² In Gloss. pris. Gal. p. 292.

scarcely make up our mind to say to anyone in particular "Your view is the only one that pleases us." If, under these circumstances, we should have recourse to the customary *non liquet* (it does not appear), this might, I fear be urged against me as a shortcoming, so doubtful and so disputed is the whole matter. But if we should not be permitted, even by the law of Solon,¹ as the saying goes, to remain neutral, then we would certainly give our assent to the opinion of the illustrious Pontanus in preference to all the others. For, besides the fact, which is clearly ascertained from Cæsar,² and Tacitus,³ that the discipline of the Druids was first found existing in Britain, the name also, and the reason of it, appositely enough, concur to show that the sylvan philosophers, who were wont to pass their whole lifetime in the woods, are called Trywiis, (*i.e.*, tree sages). There is no validity in the objection that *Try*, or *Tre*, which Pontanus says is the form of the word among the Norwegians and Danes, does not properly signify an oak, but any tree of whatever kind, for it is well-known that the ancients included under the appellation, *drus*,

¹ See Plutarch in *Vit. Solon.*

² Bell. Gall., Book vi.

³ In *Vit. Agric.*

(an oak,) every kind of tree, and that the mistletoe does not grow on the oak tree only, but grows also on other trees, though no doubt there was nothing the Druids held in greater veneration, than the oak-grown mistletoe. Here the Commentators upon Cæsar¹ have fallen into no small mistake in supposing that Pliny had derived the name of the Druids from *drus*, whereas such an idea never entered Pliny's head, for he, at all events, gives us to understand that they were named *Dryides*, or philosophers whose haunts were the woods. But, furthermore, these illustrious men, Camden² and P. Ramus,³ are of opinion that the Druids in *Diod. Siculus*,⁴ were called Saronides, a term which Callimachus,⁵ as his scholiast tells us,⁶ has employed for oaks, although Laur. Rhodomannus,⁷ to no purpose, conjectures that the reading of the text should be *Dryidas*, while some suggest *Saronidas*, and others *Sarounidas*. If then any one will entertain these and other considerations with some degree of care,

¹ Whom collectively, Godfr. Jugermannus, the brightest glory of Leipsic, published at Frankfort in 1606.

² Britan, p. 12.

³ In the book 'de moribus Gallor.'

⁴ Bibliot., Book v. ⁵ In hymno Jovis, verse 22.

⁶ Edit. Vulcan, p. 140.

⁷ In conjecturis ad Diodor. Sicul., Book v., p. 360.

and will not reject as having slender claims to belief, what *Ælfric*, as quoted by *Cluverius*,¹ has said about a magician being called *Dry* in the dialect of Britain, we doubt whether he will incline to any other opinion rather than to our own.

CHAPTER II.

An enquiry into their origin instituted. Some refer it to *Dis*, some to *Istævon*, *Alstedius* to *Hermion*, some to *Samothes*, others to *Saron*. Caesar thinks they were founded in Britain, and according to *Boethius* by the Scottish *Finnanus*, which opinion is adopted.

So much then for the origin of the name. There follows next the question of their own origin, which is involved, however, in an almost similar obscurity and uncertainty. The Druids themselves were wont to allege that, in common with other Gauls, they were the children of *Dis*, as *Cesar* bears witness.² This *Dis* was worshipped as a god among the Gauls, not by any means, as *Forcatulus*³ supposes, "because Gaul formerly abounded in silver and other metals," not because, as others imagine, *Dis*, among the Gauls was the land, "where all things arise, all things perish," as *Varro* says,⁴ nor

¹ *Germ. Antiq.*, Book i, cap. xxiv.

² *Com. de bell. Gall.*, Book vi.

³ *De imp. et philos. Gallorum*, Book i.

⁴ *De L. Lat.*

because Samotes, who is otherwise called Dis, was revered by them as their first progenitor, as John Fohtrerianus¹ thinks; but because in the Celtic language they called the Supreme God who created the universe, *Dit* or *Thiet*, as is stated by Cluverius,² whence among the Britons at this very day, *Dy়h* means eternal, as Camden attests³; and as Cæsar and the Romans did not properly understand this word, they were led by their ignorance to apply it to Dis, the God of the nether world, in the mythology of the Romans. But it was with the utmost truth they affirmed they were the children of God. For, verily, God, the infinitely good, the Almighty, is the Father of us all, and we, as Lucretius sings,⁴ “are all sprung from celestial seed, we have all one common Father.” But, however that may be, this ancestry concerns us not. We enquire here concerning the foundation of their sect, which is of a truth so variously explained, that whoever seeks to extricate himself from perplexity on the subject, would, methinks, require the help of one who can dive into the meaning of a delphic oracle. Some, among whom are Micraelius⁵ and others, think that their

¹ De prisc. Celtopræd., Book ii., p. 52.

² Germ. Antiq., Book i., chap. 9.

³ In descript. Britann., p. 18. ⁴ Book ii., v. 989.

⁵ Syntagm. Histor., Book i., sect. 3, p. 154.

religious system, sacred rites, their priests and whatever else is requisite for the constitution of their commonwealth were carried over from the Germans into Gaul and Britain, and they consequently maintain that the Druids had their origin at first in Germany, and were founded by Ustavus or Istaevon, the son of Jugaevon, the fourth king of the Germans. They would perhaps prefer to call Jugaevon the father, the founder, for of him Berosus¹ writes, that he was a philosopher, that he endeavoured to lead men from barbarism to civilization, and that he opened schools in Germany wherein the liberal arts and professions might be taught. The famous Alstedius² thinks that their society had its beginning under Hermion, the son of Istaevon. Schedius³ believes that they were founded by Thyscon himself, since Aventinus⁴ relates that Thyscon had made all the other regulations for the government of the state, and acting under the advice of Sabatius Saga, whom Armenius had received when he was expelled by Ninus, had adopted every salutary measure. Some say that they were founded by Samothes, the king of the Celts, than whom, as Berosus⁵ puts it, that age had no wiser man, and that they were

¹ Antiq., Book v. ² Chron., Schol. 30, p. 205.

³ Syngram. ii., de D's Germ., c. ii., p. 257.

⁴ An Boj., Book i., p. 12. ⁵ Antiq., Book v.

called Samothe, a name which the Greeks afterwards pronounced Semnothei. Middendorpius¹ and others will have it that they owe their parentage to Sarro, whom Berosus² states to have reigned among the Celts in the time of Zamei Ninias, and to have established the study of learning. For this reason they are called in Diodorus Siculus,³ Saronidæ, but we have already expressed our dissent from this view. Cæsar, however,⁴ should be heard in preference to all others, and he expressly asserts that the discipline of the Druids had been devised in Britain, and had thence been carried into Gaul, adding that even in his own time, those who had conceived a desire to become intimately acquainted with the system, generally crossed the sea over into Britain, for the purpose of learning it. In this view he is upheld by Tacitus,⁵ who calls Britain “the ancient seat of the Druids,” and by some others, who, going still more closely into the subject, trace their origin to the island of Mona, called by the Britons, according to Camden,⁶ *Mon Tirmon*, and *Unis Dawyll*; by the Saxons, *Monege*, and now *Anglesey*, (unless you prefer taking Mona to be that island, which, according to Buchanan, was called by the men of

¹ Acad., Book vi., p. 34. ² Antiq., Book v.

³ Bibliot., Book v., p. 308.

⁴ Com. de Bell. Gall., Book vi. ⁵ In vita. Agric.

⁶ In descript. Britan, p. 722.

old, *Manim* and *Eubonia*, according to P. Orosius, *Meonia*, or rather *Manavia*, and which is now called by its inhabitants *Menan*, and by the English *Man*), while Hector Boethius¹ assigns the honour of its original institution to Finnanus, who was son of Josinas, and tenth King of Scotland. It supports this opinion that even the derivation of the name taken as it is from the British dialect is quite in harmony with it; so that thus, amid the uncertainty prevailing among writers, we cannot but ascribe the origin of the Druids to the Britons, although we shall not be so obstinate as not to be ready, when better informed, with perfect good will, to abandon this assumption.

CHAPTER III.

The passage in Celtes about the dress of the Druids. A Discussion on their Shoes. The Druden Fusa. The Pentalpha inscribed on the banners of Antiochus and the money of Wurtzburg. The rest of their Dress is discussed. The Hooded Cloak. The Tribonion. The Staff and Wallet. The Carriage of their body. A white colour sacred to the Gods.

ITH regard to the dress worn by the Druids, we certainly regret much, that through some inexplicable supine negligence on the part of writers, it has been left so untouched, that we can hardly find anything

¹ Rer. Scotic., Book i., p. 25.

to put forward here on the subject. The renowned Conradus Celtes Protocius,¹ the first poet of Germany, and crowned as such by the Emperor Frederick the Fourth's own hands, is almost the only author who has prevented every trace of it from being completely obliterated, for he has thought good to give us a description of it as it was found represented on a very old stone. "The other day," he says, "while Joannes Theophilus was taking us with him into his own country at the base of the Harz mountains, and when we had chanced to turn aside into a monastery, we noticed six images of stone inserted in the wall on a very old stone at the door of the Church. Each image was seven feet in height, draped with a cloak and cowl of the Greek fashion,² leaving the feet naked and the head uncovered. There was a wallet of small size, the beard flowed down even to the extremity of the waist, and was parted into two. The hands held a book and a staff like that carried by Diogenes. The aspect was stern, and the brow lowering, the head was carried stiffly on one side with the eyes fixed steadfastly on the ground." So far Celtes, according to whom, if we are to place confidence in his statement, the Druid dress will then certainly not be very much different from that of the Cynics, but whatever its character

¹ In his *Norinberga*, c. 3.

may be, we must give it a brief consideration. Well then, these images in the wall go readily in the first place to show that the Druids walked bare-footed, unless Aventinus¹ be thought to hold a contrary opinion, for, saith he, "a kind of nocturnal apparition, a philosopher's shoe, and a mathematical figure still preserve their names amongst us from the Druids." Here some take this name (the philosopher's shoe) to be the Drudden Fuss, and the mathematical figure to be the pentagon or pentalpha. Schedius² hence constructs for the Druids a wooden shoe pentagon shaped, such as nearly approached in its form the mathematical figure of that name. But who does not see what an absurd kind of shoe this would be, and how inconvenient to its wearers, who, when shod with it could not have walked without their feet straddling in the clumsiest manner. If we must actually attribute shoes to them which had some kind of resemblance to the pentalpha, though the language of Aventinus³ will hardly bear such a construction, then we might assert they had used those shoes, and that they were perhaps pentagonal, though not such as you could model after the pentalpha, but such as would

¹ Book ii. Annal. Bojor. in Tiberio.

² Syngr. ii., de Dis Germ., c. ix., p. 281.

³ In the passage cited.

accord with the ordinary pentagonal figure. We know moreover that the figure of the pentalpha was stamped on those shoes just as the shoes of the Roman Senators were adorned with a crescent, as mentioned by Plutarch,¹ and the slippers of the Greek emperors, were inwoven with the figure of an eagle, as mentioned by Europalates or George Codinus.² And they might, perhaps, he said, to have done this in a mystic and hieroglyphic sense, since all agree in fixing on the pentalpha, with Hygeia (health) inscribed upon it, as the symbol of health, and this was the very symbol which Antiochus, the first King of Syria, by the advice of Alexander the Great, used on his standards in his war against the Galatians, and which he ordered to be inscribed on the coinage of his realm, after he had gained the victory, as Herm. Lignaridus states.³ While Celtes also⁴ makes mention of Frankish money which Berneggerus calls the "Würzburgian," and which having this figure stamped on it, was called after the name of the Druids⁵—*Druiden Fuss*. On this point, however, we readily leave every one to the free and full exercise of his own judgment. From

¹ Problem. Roman.

² *Peri offikiōn Constantin.*, p. 55.

³ *Oblect. Academ.*, c. l., p. 378.

⁴ In the passage cited.

⁵ *Quæstion. xi.* in *Tacitu:n.*

Celtes' description¹ they were, in other parts of their dress, as we have already remarked, not very much different from the Cynics. They went with their heads uncovered—perhaps in summer and in fine weather, or while conducting the services of religion. But that they sometimes covered their heads, is sufficiently proved by the fact that the cloak had a cowl, otherwise the sewing on of a cowl to it would have been purposeless. The cloak, after the Greek fashion, was beyond question not different from that with which the Greek philosophers in Athens and elsewhere, were wrapped round—the *tribōnion* to wit, about which many particulars have been collected by the author of *Mantisa*, on the *Pallium* (cloak) of Tertullian,² from which philosophers³ had even acquired a peculiar name, so that they were generally called *tribōnophoroi*, while in after times the entire population of Athens was divided into two distinct classes, the *tribōnophoroi*, and the *Birrho-*

¹ In the passage cited.

² Tertullian wrote the treatise entitled "De Pallio," to vindicate himself for having discarded the dress ordinarily worn, and donned the *Pallium* instead thereof. It is still a question to what class of persons the *Pallium* properly belonged, and also on what occasion it was first assumed by Tertullian.—Translator.

³ P. 126, 135, 139 seqq.

phoroi,¹ (the Commons and the Magistracy), as we learn from the same author,² citing the authority of Palladius. The little wallet and the staff were, in like manner, parts of the equipment of the Greek Philosophers, and said to have been first assumed by Antisthenes, as we learn from Diog. Laertius,³ who says: "Antisthenes first doubled the cloak, and used it exclusively, he assumed also the staff and the wallet." They allowed the beard to flow down to the waist, and parted it from the upper lip, because, being so worn, it seemed to give them a singularly grave and imposing appearance, as well as indicate a bold and resolute temper, for, as the poet sings:⁴ "A beard and bristly hairs on the person become the manly." A book in the hands was added to the image, to indicate, it may be, that the Druids were teachers, though from other sources we can gather little, if any, information about their books. And, lastly, that "the aspect was stern, and the brow lowering, and the head carried stiffly on one side, with the eyes fixed

¹ The Birrus was a cape and hood worn over the shoulders, and used also at times to cover the head. It is thought to have got its name from the red colour (pyrrhos) of the wool of which it was made.—Translator.

² P. 141 seqq. in Lausiaca.

³ In Vit. Philos. Bk. vi. 286. ⁴ Ovid. Metam., xiii.

steadfastly on the ground," this likewise was characteristic of nearly all the philosophers, since being men perplexed with continual uncertainty regarding matters of sublime importance they were, in but few instances, able to relax their knitted brow and disperse "the grim cloud that hung on the eyelids," as Euripides expresses it. To these particulars we add further, what we gather from Pliny,¹ that the Druids went about clad sometimes (that is when reaping the mistletoe) in a white robe, though of what description otherwise that robe was we have no notice at all in that writer. Some are of opinion that it was a *sagum* (a cassock), because that was a common article of dress among the Gauls, and Varro,² and Isidorus³, contend that *sagum* is a Gallican word. Against these authors we shall certainly not go forth to do battle without a helmet on our head, but that the Druids also, while performing their customary acts of worship, preferred a white colour to all others I have no manner of doubt, nor that they regarded a white colour as pleasing and sacred to the gods supreme in grace and might. Plato⁴ appears to have entertained the same opinion, for he says that white colours specially beseem the gods, an expression

¹ Book xvi., c. 44. ² De Lingua Latin., Book iv.

³ Book xix., c. 24.

⁴ De Legibus, Book xii.

which Cicero¹ has translated into Latin thus : *Albus color praecipue deo decorus est.* But enough on this point.

CHAPTER IV.

The Pontiff of the Druids. His supreme authority in governing. The Roman Pontiffs the most illustrious of the Druids. The Pontiff holds his dignity for life. On his death the worthiest succeeds. Divitius a Druid. The succession sometimes decided by an appeal to arms. Damasus and Ursicinus Roman Pontiffs.

 NOW since there is not any nation, yea not even any family that can exist without a head and established rule, the Druids weighing carefully the necessity of the case, not only declined to live without a head, but putting a curb upon themselves, appointed one of their own number to bear rule over the others. For Cæsar² writes: "Over the whole of them (the Druids) one presides who has supreme authority over them." This was a salutary institution, by the power and vigour of which peace and concord were upheld and preserved among them, strife quelled, friendship fostered, and discipline constantly maintained. Thus, doubtless, the Pontiff's supreme authority even alone of itself was adequate to keep his subordinates to their duty, so that anyone could without any ill-feeling or attempt at evasion

¹ De Legibus, Book ii.

² De Bell. Gall., Book vi.

discharge decently and in order the functions of his office. In this way also the whole burden of religious ceremonies was sustained by himself, so that at his mere bidding holidays were appointed or abolished, the mode of worshipping the gods was prescribed, the laity was instructed, and everything which had reference to the worship of the gods was carefully provided for in a legitimate way. Among the Romans also, in a manner not unlike, "one person presided over the whole order of those who managed the sacred rites, who was called the *Pontifex Maximus*," either from one of his duties, that namely of making the Sublician bridge, as Dio¹ and Varro² hold, or from *posse* and *facere*, that is, *sacrificare*, according to the opinion of Q. Scævola, cited by the same Varro.³ And just as among the Romans, the Pontiffs were regarded as the most illustrious of the priests, as Dion. Halicarnassus writes,⁴ being neither subject to anyone's power, nor bound to render an account of their doings either to the Senate or the people, as the same writer elsewhere states,⁵ so also when we consider that the Druids as a body enjoyed the

¹ Book ii.

² De Lat. Ling., Book i. See also Plutarch in Numa.

³ In the passage cited.

⁴ Antiq., Book i., p. 30.

⁵ Book ii., p. 133.

highest social distinction, we must believe that in a much higher degree he who was reverenced by that order as its chief must have been held in pre-eminent honour by the entire community. That dignity, moreover, was not circumscribed by fixed limits of time, so that the office had to be resigned on the expiry of a term for which it was tenable as was the case with the Roman Consuls, the Spartan Ephors, the Athenian Archontes, and others; but that post of supremacy was held for life, so that they continued to exercise the functions of government till the very end of their days. But when such a Pontiff died he was succeeded by that priest who was of higher rank than the others, as is stated by Cæsar.¹ Nor was there anything unjust in this, since one who was to wield a sceptre even more than real ought not, assuredly, to have been taken from the ranks of the proletariat, otherwise some scurvy paltry-spirited knave might, by his shameful misconduct, have brought scandal on an office of such exalted dignity. It hence appears that princes were consigned to them to become members of their society and be trained for their pursuits. And this inference is supported by the case of Divitiacus, the brother of Dumnorin, a prince of the *Æduans*, whom Cæsar² once and again

¹ In the passage cited.

² *De Bell. Gall.*, Books i, ii., &c.

mentions, while Cicero¹ himself states that he had known him as the guest of his brother Quintus, and describes him as a man who knew the science of Nature or Physics, and who predicted future events partly by augury and partly by guess-work. When it happened that several of the claimants were all equal, the one who was most suitable was elected by the votes of the Druids, just as among the Romans, when a Pontiff died, his successor was appointed, not by the votes of the people, but by the College of Priests who selected from their own number the person whom they judged to be the most competent of them all for the office.² But just as the saying goes, which according to Suetonius³ was for ever on the lips of Cæsar, and is worthy not of a prince but of a tyrant :— “ If one must be unjust, it is most glorious to be unjust for despotic power, while in all else we ought to act piously,” so even the Druids, who had a high reputation for justice, nevertheless, as Cæsar⁴ himself informs us, were frequently agitated by dissensions among themselves, when the question

¹ *De Legibus*, Book i., p. 369.

² See Dion. Book ii.

³ *In Julio*.

⁴ These words Euripides puts into the mouth of Eteocles. See his *Phœnix*, l. 527.—Translator.

⁵ *De Bell. Gall.*, Book vi., c. 9.

concerned the supreme dignity. Nay, they had even sometimes recourse to arms when the equal pride of the competitors prevented the dispute from being settled otherwise. As the Druids were but Pagan philosophers they ought not, perhaps, to be so much blamed for this, seeing that it is nothing unusual for ourselves to hear that even the most blessed Fathers themselves, the Popes of Rome, animated, no doubt, by too fervent a love towards God, have striven with blood-stained arms for the pastoral superintendence of the sheepfold of God, and that, too, with such animosity that Am. Marcellinus himself expressly says of Damasus and Ursicinus (called by Rufinus¹ *Ursinus*, by Socrates² and Sozomenus³ *Ursacius*, by Nicephorus⁴ *Ursicius*, but by Anastacius⁵ and Lintprand⁶ *Ursicinus*), that being inflamed beyond human precedent with their rival ambition to seize the episcopal throne, they strove so keenly that the partisans on either side had to encounter the risk of death and wounds.

¹ Hist. Eccl., l. 2, c. 10.

² Book iv., c. 24.

³ Book vi., c. 23.

⁴ Book xi., c. 30.

⁵ l. in Vit. Patr.

⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER V.

The Druids administrators of religious matters. The groves where they sacrificed. They had no temples. The oak the Celtic image of the Deity. An oak of extraordinary beauty fenced with a rampart. The appalling gloom of the interior of the enclosure. Its fountain and lake. The altar of turf. The victims of various kinds. In great emergencies even human beings were sacrificed. Time and mode of immolating these and criminals as described by Diodorus and Strabo. What the mistletoe is; the mistel of the Germans. Highly esteemed by the Druids. How they reaped it. Au guy l'an neut, Plante, Plante. Mistletoe sent as a gift. Thence the celebrated Ruba derives guyottiere, and the ground of this conjecture. Savin, marshwort, vervain, magical serpent's eggs.

BUT we must now look more closely into their functions, which were certainly both so varied and so multifarious that they included not only the worship of the gods but even the administration of all the departments of the state. The worship of the gods has the first claim to notice, and with reference thereto Caesar¹ says: "they officiate in sacred matters and have charge of the sacrifices both public and private," and he adds soon afterwards: "the Gauls use the services of the Druids in offering sacrifices." Strabo² writes to the same effect: "the Druids were always present when sacred rites were performed." And Diodorus³ speaking

¹ Book vi. ²Strabo, Book iv., p. 136. ³Diod. Biblioth., Book v.

of the Gauls says: "It is a custom with them to celebrate no sacred rites without a philosopher, for it is necessary, they argue, to present thank-offerings to the gods through those who are acquainted with the divine nature, since such men speak, as it were, the same language (as the gods) and it is necessary too, they think, to ask blessings from the gods through the same mediators." That we should therefore say something briefly about their system of divine worship, we are reminded by the principle of our arrangement and the purpose we have in view. Now the most important part of that worship consisted in the offering of sacrifices, both private and public, and that we may the better unfold what we have to say on the subject, we propose to consider the numerous details by noting each of them separately. And first, with respect to the place where the sacrifices were offered, it was a grove dense, dark, and dismal, and as Lucan has it:¹ "never in a long course of time profaned, encircling with its interlacing boughs the darkened air, and the cold shades through which the rays of sunshine never pierce from above." And as he says afterwards: "There even birds feared to alight on the boughs, and there wild beasts feared to crouch in dens. The wind rested not on those bowers, nor were

¹ De bell. Pharsal., Book iii.

they touched by the lightning shaken from the dark clouds ; the trees trembled of themselves though no breezes shook their leaves." That groves were thus used both by the ancient Germans and Gauls alike appears also from what Tacitus says :¹ " Their deities are not immured in temples, nor represented under any kind of resemblance to the human form, as that would detract from the majesty of celestial beings. They set apart groves and woods for the purposes of religion, and give the names of the gods to that sacred recess which was beheld with profound reverence but never entered." For as Schildius says :² " groves abounding with trees of great age and extraordinary height, whose thickly interwoven boughs excluded the light of day, seemed to be more majestic than temples reared by human hands. The very tallness of the trees in the lofty wood, and the seclusion of the place, and the wondrous spectacle of a shade so dense and so continuous under the open sky, all gave assurance of the presence amid those recesses of some divine being who was as propitious and benign as the heaven itself and its luminaries." They did not, however, select just any kind of grove for their sacrifices, but only one that was distinguished above

¹ *De sit. et mor. Germ.*

² *De Cancis*, Book ii., c. v.

others by the antiquity and lofty stature of its oaks, resembling those two of enormous size which grew on the banks of the Danube, as mentioned by Aventinus.¹ For Pliny² writes to the following effect: "Nothing do the Druids hold in greater sanctity than the oak, and of themselves they select groves of oak trees, and do not celebrate any religious rites without oak leaves." Maximus Tyrius accordingly says³: "The Celts worship the Deity, and a lofty oak is the Celtic image of the Deity." And Servius on that passage in Virgil⁴: "Jove's mighty oak strong in time honoured power," has the following note: "Every oak is consecrated to Jove." And so great indeed was the religious veneration with which they regarded groves of that kind, that if a tree in them happened to fall, the matter was thought to require expiation. Nay, more, as Lucan sings⁵: "being impressed by the awful majesty of the place they believed that their axes if uplifted to strike the sacred oaks would recoil back upon their own limbs." And in this connection Claudian⁶ extols Stilico to the sky, because that after he had completely

¹ Annal. Boj., Book iii., p. 186-7.

² N. H., Book xvi., c. 44.

³ Dissert. xxxviii.

⁴ Georg., Book iii., v. 132.

⁵ De bell. Phars., Book iii.

⁶ De laud. Stilic., Book i.

subjugated the Rhine, “the Romans were free to hunt amid the vast solitudes of the Hircynian forest, and their foreign axes could with impunity fell the weird groves of an old superstition, and oaks which imaged the Deity.” Should you ask the reason why the oak was dedicated to Jove, you may, if you choose, see the reason stated in *Didorus Siculus*¹, and also what that writer has to say about the prophetic oak.² Although the whole grove was set apart to the Deity, those oaks, nevertheless, which surpassed all the others in the grove, both in height and in beauty, were fenced round by peculiar kind of rampart in the fashion of a temple, so that the space within the walls encircling those oaks might be made, as it were, a *Holy of Holies*—a circumstance to which *Lucan* refers in these lines³: “The people resorting to worship do not approach too near their Deity, but give him wide room. When the sun is in mid heaven, or when black night holds all the sky, the priest himself, as he draws near, trembles, and dreads lest he should come unawares upon the Lord of the Grove.” This fence, we may be sure, kept out the unhallowed throng, which under other systems of religion was ordered to hold itself aloof

¹ *Bibl.*, Book ii.

² *Bibl.*, Book 17, 18.

³ *De bell. Phars.*, Book iii.

from the holier mysteries by a prescribed form of words, as for instance : "Keep far off, far off, ye profane," and, also, "Keep far off, all who are sinful," as Callimachus¹ has it ; and Virgil, also, who says² : " Hence, hence, ye unhallowed ! and rid the whole grove of your presence." Such forms were used lest the profane and the unininitiated in these solemn rites should incur the vengeance of the gods for their curiosity and daring presumption. Moreover, in those recesses they had also fountains and a singular kind of water-pools said to have been used for the ablutions of the priests, and the victims, and for supplementing the holy ritual. Thus Lucan³ says: " Then a great flood of water gushes down from the dark fountains." And Seneca,⁴ in the passage where Creon refers to the grove of Tiresias near Thebes, thus speaks : " In the centre stands a gigantic tree casting its dense umbrage over the lowlier thicket. With its boughs far outspread in a mighty circuit, it suffices of itself to defend the grove. At its roots a dismal pool, which knows nor light nor sunshine stagnates, congealed by an eternal frost. A slimy quagmire hems round this sluggish fount-

¹ In hymn, Apol.

² Aeneid, Book vi.

³ In the passage cited.

⁴ In CEdipo.

tain." Within this holy ground, and amid the silence of its groves stood a round-shaped altar which they had constructed of green sods that it might thus best win success for the prayers which they would there offer, and that it might exhibit a common origin with the dark gloom of their temple, and make the gods more propitious on account of the simple nature of the worship. Lucan¹ points to the dismal nature of the rites observed at the construction of these altars. Virgil speaks of them as grassy,² and Silius Italicus³ says: "Altars of verdant turf in haste upspring, an awe-inspiring sight," and elsewhere⁴, also, he says: "Sods had been piled up in constructing the altars;" and Ovid⁵ says: "And let a green altar be made of grassy sods." Victims were then led to these altars, consisting, according to Strabo,⁶ of fatted cattle and wild beasts of all kinds. And Pliny⁷ introduces mention of bulls of a white colour, while Cesar⁸ himself hints not obscurely that captured animals were immolated by the Druids

¹ In the passage cited.

² *Aeneid*, Book xii.

³ Book iii.

⁴ Book xvi.

⁵ *Trist.*, Book v., eleg. v.

⁶ *Geogr.*, Book iv.

⁷ *N. H.*, Book xvi., c. 44.

⁸ In the passage cited.

to Mars, the god of war. Nay, more, if they were attacked with virulent maladies, or went to battle, or risked their lives, or were otherwise exposed to great jeopardy, they had recourse even to human victims as their last hope of salvation, no doubt, because, as Cæsar¹ says, they judged that the immortal gods could not be otherwise propitiated than by offering a human life in ransom of a human life. In war accordingly, if their ranks anywhere seemed to waver, they would massacre the captives as an offering to the war god, or if they suffered under any other public calamity they would devote a separate victim to each of the deities under whose displeasure they imagined themselves to have fallen. It must be understood, however, that they did not think of punishing the innocent unless there was a deficiency of malefactors, who had been arrested for theft, or robbery, or some other crime, and whose punishment they looked upon as being more acceptable to the gods. But if they did so think, they were then so remorselessly cruel that they did not spare the lives even of their own children. So great was the malice of the devil, so great was the blindness of men! But why should we wonder at the Druids when not even the Israelites themselves

¹ In the passage cited.

were exempt from this wicked practice, as we see in the cases of Jephtha¹ and Ahaz², so that, as Pliny properly says³: "on these points the whole world was at one, though otherwise it was discordant, and its different parts were unknown to each other." Of the mode of immolating a victim Diodorus gives this account⁴: "When they have under consideration certain matters of great consequence, they have a custom which is strange and incredible. Having persuaded a man into compliance, they strike him with a sacrificial knife on the part above his midriff, and when he falls under the blow they divine what the result of their enterprise will be from the way in which the man falls, and his limbs are scattered about, as well as from the gushing of his blood, putting faith in an old and long-protracted observation of these signs." Strabo⁵ concurs with Diodorus in all but one point—for according to him it was not the breast but the back that was struck. His words are: "They would strike a man devoted as an offering in his back with a knife, and divine from his convulsive throes." Add Tacitus⁶ where he

¹ Judges xi. 31.

² 2 Kings xvi. 3.

³ N. H., Book xxx., c. 1.

⁴ Bibliot., Book v.

⁵ Geogr., Book iv.

⁶ Annal., Book xiv.

speaks of the Druids of Britain: "They deemed it right to learn the will of the gods from the entrails of human beings." The blood, however, they caught, and therewith according to Tacitus,¹ "they made a burnt-offering upon the altar." They also purified trees with this blood, as we gather from Lucan²: "And every tree was purified with human gore." But those whose entrails they did not think it was necessary to inspect for the purpose of divination "they enclosed alive within an image made of hay and wicker-work and dry wood, which was set on fire, so that the men within being enveloped in the flames, perished," as Cæsar testifies.³ This effigy they evidently copied from the image of Moloch, about which many particulars may be learned from the illustrious Selden.⁴ From Strabo⁵ we gather that they immolated human victims in other ways than those already specified, for he says: "They shot some of their victims dead with arrows, or crucified them in their temples." And who knows but that by this rite that consummated trickster the Devil meant to ridicule the sacrifice offered up by

¹ In the passage cited.

² In the passage cited.

³ In the passage cited.

⁴ *Syngram. de Dis Syriis*, Vol. i., cap. vi.

⁵ *Geogr.*, Book iv.

Christ upon the Cross. Diodorus Siculus¹ writes in a similar strain: "After keeping malefactors in custody for five years they impale them as sacrifices to the gods, and having prepared immense funeral pyres, they devote them thereon with numerous other first-offerings. They also use prisoners of war as victims when they offer sacrifices to the gods." Now, just as from his claw we know the lion, so from all these glimpses a more than sufficient light is thrown upon that hideous superstition of the ancients—upon its hideous sacrifices, and its hideous worshippers. They did not, however, always use men as the victims for sacrifice, for as we have said, animals of different kinds were sacrificed on set occasions, and Pliny himself² where he speaks about the gathering of the mistletoe, preserves a deep silence regarding human victims. But about this gathering of the mistletoe, the principle on which we have arranged the succession of our topics seems to require us here to say something. The mistletoe referred to was a parasitic plant found growing principally on oak trees. If you plant it, it does not grow, do what you may, and it can only be reproduced by passing through the stomach of birds, particularly the wood-pigeon and the thrush. By the

¹ Bibliot., Book v.

² H. N., Book xvi., c. 44.

Germans it is called mistell, and now-a-days it is thought to be useful for fattening sheep. When wrought into a dough with the oil of the acorn it takes fast hold of the wings of birds that come in contact with it, and thus serves for a bird-snare. This mistletoe the Druids held in the profoundest veneration, believing that it was an antidote to all poisons, that a potion made from it imparted fecundity to every sterile animal, whatever its species, and that it could be applied as a panacea for diseases of all sorts, whence it bore a special name and was called the Heal-all. Nay, they even worshipped it as a very god," as *Alexand. ab Alex.*¹ testifies: "They verily thought that it was sent from heaven, and was a token that the tree it grew on was chosen of God. And since it was rare to find, it was when found all the more devoutly adored, and this chiefly on the sixth day of the moon, which then formed the beginning of their months and years." Therefore, the Druids, as *Joh. Picardus Fontrerianus*² has it, "At the very beginning of the year, that is, at evening twilight, or when night kindles her first lamp, (for, as *Cæsar* says,³ 'The Gauls so compute the beginnings of their months and their years that the

¹ *Gen. dier.*, Book iii., c. xiii.

² *Celtopæd.*, Book ii., p. 65 seq.

³ In the passage cited.

day is made to follow after the night'), the simple-minded common folk used to run with unbounded joy into the groves to tell the Druids the news, if they had anywhere found the mistletoe. And that no one might be slack in the search, certain men were appointed to encourage everybody to seek diligently for it, whence Ovid says: 'The Druids, the Druids were wont to call out to the mistletoe.' When they had found it, they built "an altar under the tree whereon it grew, and, in preparation for a feast and a sacrifice, brought to the altar two bulls of a white colour, whose horns were wreathed with oak leaves. Then the priest, arrayed in a white robe, climbed the tree and with a golden sickle reaped the mistletoe, catching it in his white mantle. Then they immolated the victims with prayers (which, according to Pliny,¹ they offered up after turning themselves to the left), that God would make his own gift prosperous unto whom he gave it." Traces of this ceremony are said to exist even at the present day in Gaul, and especially in Burgundy where, at the beginning of every year some of the lower orders go about from door to door, invoking blessings on themselves and their friends, and exclaiming *au guy l'an neuf*, (*i.e.* A new year to the mistletoe), "after which, in still louder tones, they subjoin *Planté, Planté,*

¹ Book xxvii., c. 10.

an expression which has reference to the fecundity and fertility of the year." The celebrated Merula,¹ moreover, states on the authority of Goropius Becanus, Elias Vinetus, and Vignereus, that it was usual for the mistletoe to be sent by way of a gift, whereby the senders wished their friends a happy new year. Claudius de Rubys² again lays it down that Guillotiere, a suburb of Lyons on the opposite side of the Rhone, is so called from having been *Guy l'hostiere*, because we may believe "that the people of Lyons had gone out to an oak forest which spread over an adjacent plain, now the plain of Airien, and had, on their return, deposited the mistletoe in that suburb, that it might afterwards with all due solemnity be escorted thence into town by men of all classes, celebrating the occasion by a ballet which was a medley of dance and song, and by a procession at the head of which the images of their own gods were paraded," of which, at greater length, Jodo Sincerus treats.³ As for other particulars which should be here subjoined, such as notices of the savin of the Druids, of their marsh-wort, of their vervain, of their magical serpents' eggs, &c., which they used in their medical capacity, the kind reader will find

¹ Cosmogr., Part ii., Book iii., c. 2, p. 308.

² Book i., c. 29, p. 427 seq.

³ In. Itiner. Gall., p. 428.

them all very minutely described by Pliny,¹ but as the details are too prolix we shrink with good reason from transferring them to these pages, and we must, besides, be sparing of the limited space at our disposal.

CHAPTER VI.

The Druids have a great number of disciples. They enjoy many privileges. They conceal their doctrines. Instruction in medicine communicated at least to such as adopt it as their profession. The book shut and open according to Alciatus. They teach each disciple for twenty years, sometimes in a cave or in the woods. What they teach. They believe in the immortality of the soul. They do not agree with the Pythagoreans. They propound in verse all that has to be learned by their disciples. An oracle of theirs in Senna, opposite the Osiamic shores. They are famous for divination.

O much then for their sacrifices—and it follows that we should now speak of the instruction of youth, to which the Druids attend no less carefully than to the sacrifices, for, saith Cæsar :² “a great number of young men resort to them for the purpose of being taught,” and again a little afterwards he tells us : “From this country also many spontaneously repair to them for instruction, and are sent by their parents and relations.” They were allured no doubt by the authority, not to mention the immunities, the

¹ Books xxiv., c. 11, xxv., c. 9, and xix., c. 3.

² In the passage cited.

honour, and the other by no means common advantages which the Druids enjoyed. They were accustomed, for instance, to keep aloof from war, they paid no taxes, as all their neighbours did, they had no military duties to perform, and they were exempt from every burden. It must not, however, be believed that they admitted all and sundry to instruction, but rather, that like the Greeks, Indians, and Ethiopians they only received such, as after sufficient trial, had at length given many proofs of mental capacity and high character. And Mela¹ himself indicates this when he asserts that the most noble of the nation were educated by them; a prerogative to which they had a most just right, for as the doctrine of the Druids was the most noble of all, so also their authority was supreme over all other classes. The most precious pearls certainly ought not to have been entrusted to anyone whose nature was perverse and unsound, or mean, trivial, and inept, lest their education should thereby suffer. And against such an evil those Druids certainly guarded most carefully, and for this reason did not wish their disciples to communicate their doctrine to the common people, and hence Mela² writes "that they taught secretly lest forsooth

¹ *De sit. orbis*, Book iii., p. 76.

² In the passage cited.

if their sanctuaries were laid open to all, their authority would eventually be reduced to insignificance. So also among the Greeks none were initiated into the mysteries of the goddess of medicine, except those who had previously given their oath that they would not impart a knowledge of that art to anyone who was not sprung from the lineage of *Æsculapius*, as is sufficiently proved by the oath of Hippocrates, which the illustrious Meibomius has lately sought to illustrate in his admirable commentary." And this is what Andr. Alciatus¹ thinks is denoted by the book shut and open, which to this day is customarily handed over to those on whom the insignia of doctorship are conferred by the seats of learning. For he thinks that they are reminded by this symbol "that they should shut their books against the unworthy, and not reveal the secrets and mysteries of their art, while at the same time they should open and spread them out before the learned and the good, although we are not ignorant of the fact that others interpret the symbolic act in a different way." But just as the Druids were studious to conceal their doctrine, so also their schools were exceedingly well adapted for this purpose. For Mela² says: "They teach the

¹ *Parerg.*, Book viii., c. x.

² *De sit. orb.*, Book iii.

most noble of the nation many things secretly, and for a great length of time, even for twenty years, in a cave or in sequestered groves." With this agree the words of Lucan:¹ "Ye dwell in the depths of groves in remote woods." And in those thickets and caves they were wont to teach and hand down as traditions to the young, such doctrines as Cæsar² mentions, as for instance, "that souls do not perish, but pass after dissolution from one body to another. They give besides much instruction about the heavenly bodies and their motions, about the magnitude of the world and its countries, about the properties of matter, and the strength and power of the immortal gods, &c." Whether they taught that God was in essence one, with a trinity of persons, as Cluverius³ and Schedius⁴ think, we would not venture rashly to assert. They hold, also, according to the testimony of Strabo,⁵ "that the world was imperishable, but that fire and water would at some time or other gain the mastery over it." As for their other tenets, the scantiness of their writings, and the strictness of the law by which the divulging of their doctrine was pro-

¹ Phars., Book i.

² De bell. Gall., Book vi.

³ Germ. Antiq., Book i., c. 29.

⁴ Syngr. ii., de Dis Germ., c. 24.

⁵ Geogr., Book iv.

hibited, refuse us the knowledge of them. This alone we know, that with a view to make the common people all the readier to undergo death they taught, as Cæsar¹ states, "that the souls of men do not perish after dissolution." Diodorus² confirms this statement, saying : "The doctrine of Pythagoras prevails among them that the souls of men are immortal, and for an appointed number of years live again, the soul entering into another body, on which account, also, the dead will recognize these souls at the time of sepulture." And Marcellinus says³: "The Druids being endowed with higher natures, and, as the authority of Pythagoras decreed, bound to each other in close fraternities, were stimulated to investigate subjects that were deep and occult, and, despising human concerns, asserted that souls were immortal." This doctrine of the soul's immortality was certainly believed in also by the Indians, if what Strabo⁴ says of the Brahmins is entitled to credit. Indeed, many are pleased to say that this doctrine is a very ancient tradition and had spread abroad from our first parents to all the more civilized nations, a view in which the famous

¹ De bell. Gall., vi.

² Bibl., Book v.

³ Book xv., p. 56, Lindenbr. edition.

⁴ Geogr., Book xv.

Hugo Grotius concurs¹. But when that doctrine of the Metempsychosis of which Pythagoras is said to have been the author is attributed by Diodorus² and Cæsar³ to the Druids, we are induced to confess that a wrong is thereby done to them, and this, on the evidence of Mela and Lucan, in whose days the doctrine of the Druids was much more clearly known. For Mela⁴, thus writes: "One of their tenets has leaked out and become publicly known, no doubt in order that the people might be all the better soldiers, the tenet, viz., that souls are eternal, and that there is a second life in the world of shades." And Lucan says⁵: "According to your doctrine, departed shades descend to the turbulent seats of Erebus, and the ghostly realms of infernal Dis. The same spirit as on earth directs the movements of the limbs in that other sphere. Death is the middle point of the long continuous life (if what ye sing be fact)." Strabo⁶ must be numbered with these, for he says "that they taught that souls were indestructible." For we cannot yet bring ourselves to believe that those wisest of philosophers had favoured

¹ *De Verit. Relig. Christ.*, Book i.

² *Bibl.*, Book v.

³ In the passage cited.

⁴ Book iii., last chap.

⁵ *De Phars.*, Book i.

⁶ *Geogr.*, Book iv.

that foolish opinion, when on other points, you cannot readily detect them in such absurdities as were indulged in by the same fry of Greek writers, and it is still uncertain whether the Metempsychosis in such a crude form had ever entered the mind of Pythagoras, if at least the testimonies which Coel. Rhodiginus¹ has summoned to his aid be genuine. But these are matters for Pythagoreans to see to ; we have fully discharged our duty by freeing the Druids from the imputation of having held this error. For by this doctrine (of the soul's immortality), the Druids gained the object they had in view, since according to Lucan :² “ Under its influence the mind of these brave men was bent on rushing upon the sword, and their souls welcomed death ; they even deemed it cowardly to spare their life which was to be afterwards restored to them.” Hence also the Solduri cheerfully threw themselves upon the funeral piles of their friends, in the hope of living along with them in the next life, a thing we can scarcely believe they would have done unless the hope of a future life had taken firm root in their

¹ Lect. Antiq., Book v., c. 40., and Book iii. cap. 24.

² De Phars. Book i.

³ About whom see Cæsar, Comm. de Bell. Gall., Book iii.

minds. And to what end, I would ask, would they lend money which was to be paid back in the nether world, as Valerius Maximus¹ has it, or to what end when they were burning or burying the dead, would a business account be made ready for these dead in their next life, and even a demand for what was owing them, be sent along with them to the nether world, as Pomponius puts it;² if they had believed in that insane transmigration of souls? Then lastly they devoted constant attention to practical philosophy, thinking it base that those imbued with learning should not excel others in honourable conduct, as appears from the testimony of Strabo.³ These and such like notions they imparted to their disciples in verse. For that divine influence of poetry by which it wins its way into the heart of man, and of which Strabo treats at great length in refuting Eratosthenes, was a fact which did not escape their notice,⁴ and they accordingly compelled their disciples to commit a great number of verses to memory, but not to paper, lest, if these verses should be written down, their doctrines would leak out to the public, or lest their

¹ Book ii., c. 6.

² *De Sit. Orb.*, Book iii.

³ *Geogr.*, Book iv.

⁴ *Geogr.*, Book i.

disciples trusting to scrolls should neglect to cultivate the memory, and both these reasons are adduced by Cæsar himself.¹ And, further, it was not their aim to do their work with hurry and confusion, or to make their pupils good scholars in six months time, but as Mela² says, "they trained them for such a length of time, that some continued under instruction for twenty years," and Cæsar³ bears him out in his statement. But the Druids, besides imparting a liberal education to the young, "spared no pains to explain to them the mysteries of religion." Just as Greece, however, knew by experience, how indirect in his explanations was that priest who interpreted the oracles, and in how great perplexity the Delphic tripod sent those away who had come to consult it, so Gaul, beyond doubt, had a similar experience, and Britain also: since those two countries were in bondage to ventriloquists, as Mela⁴ not obscurely indicates: "Sena," he says, "in the British sea, opposite the Asismic shores, is famous for an oracle of the Gallic Deity whose priestesses, nine in number, and sanctified by perpetual virginity, were called by the Gauls Cenæ." The Druids,

¹ *De Bell. Gall.*, Book vi.

² Book iii.

³ In the passage cited.

⁴ Book iii.

therefore, interpreted the responses of this oracle and of any others that were established, since the nation being very superstitious would, no doubt, frequently consult them. They were, besides, much devoted to divination—for we thus read in P. Trogus Justinus :¹ “The Gauls above all other people are skilled in the science of divination,” or “are famous” in it, as Bongarsius, cited by Vossius,² reads. And Cicero³ says of Divitiacus, “that he predicted future events partly by divination and partly by guess-work.” So much, then, for this part of our subject.

CHAPTER VII.

The Druids domineered over Kings. Settled wars. Exercised judicial authority in the territories of the Carnutes, now Chartres. Anathematized those who resisted them, and those were held accursed by all.

FOR, as was said in the outset, it was not the worship of the gods only, but even the entire direction of nearly the whole of the State that was in their hands, seeing that they both domineered even over kings, as Dion of Prusa (Chrysostom), in Suidas, will have it, and also frequently when two contending armies had

¹ Hist., Book xxiv.

² Ido., Book i., c. 39.

³ De Divinat., Book i., p. 369.

confronted each other in battle line, they would approach either host even though swords were drawn and spears levelled, and, advancing into the very midst, would make them cease fighting just as if they were giving a beating to so many wild beasts.¹ They settled also all controversies whether public or private, and if any offence had been committed, or murder perpetrated, or there had arisen any dispute about an inheritance or about boundaries, it was they who gave judgment in these cases also.² Accordingly, in order that heaven-born justice might be administered with all the greater impartiality, sanctity, and purity, they met at a certain season of the year, in the territories of the Carnutes, a district which is thought to be in the very centre of Gaul, and held sessions there in a consecrated place, unto which all from every quarter who had disputes in hand, resorted, and submitted obediently to their judgments and decrees as final and of sacred obligation. Carnutum at this day is commonly called Chartres, and is situated in a region which in point of amenity far surpasses any other in Gaul, being full of woods and groves. There some traces of the Druids are said to be still extant, the town of Dreux, namely, which is situate near the

¹ Diodor. Sicul. Bibl., Book v.

² Cæsar, in passage already cited.

over here, enjoying the distinction of giving name to a town, and being thought to have got its name from the Indians." Although, however, their authority was supreme in the land, and their power almost uncontested, even to such a degree that the very highest classes of the community obeyed them, strict and unyielding in their decrees as they were, yet just as there is no gained man without some circuit grants, so even among these people there were some who, breaking through all the restraints of honour and justice, refused to yield obedience to their decrees. The Persians, in such cases, terrified by the authority and power of religion, grasped the thunders of anathema, and with death, classes interdicted such refractory and obstinate offenders, whether they were petty chiefs or great princes, from fire and from water. When the offenders had, however, been thus terrified into submission, the Persians endeavoured to return them to a better life. This interdict, indeed, was the greatest and severest punishment they could inflict. For those on whom it was laid were classed with the impious and the reprobate—all men forsook them, avoided going near them or talking with them, no doubt lest they might be injured by contamination with them. They obtained no relief when they

¹ Inde, Sacer, in Itiner. Gr., p. 300 seq.

appealed for it to law, and no mark of honour was paid to them. So great was the importance attached to the excommunication awarded by men of the highest justice.¹

CHAPTER VIII.

The religion of the Druids interdicted by Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius. The opinion of Lipsius. The opinion of Pithœus and Torretius. Mention of the Druids in Lampridius, Vopiscus, Eusebius. They emigrated from Gaul under the Carolingians, Arnolphus, and the Ottos. They expound the Christian religion. The conclusion.

ND so, having now up to this point considered, as best we could, the pursuits of the Druids, one last labour only still remains, of which we have to acquit ourselves—an enquiry, namely, into their suppression and abolition—and this part of our subject we shall treat with all possible brevity. For the religion of the Druids, since it was characterized by revolting cruelty, since it admitted customs which were strange and incredible, since its devotees at savage altars worshipped frightful deities, not without blood-offerings of a most horrible kind according to the accounts transmitted to us,² was an abomination of such a nature that the cultured Romans

¹ Cæsar de Bell. Gall., Book vi.

² Suetonius in Claudio, c. 25. Diod. Sicul. Bibl., Book v. Lucan de Bell. Phars., Book i.

never at any time ceased from labouring to suppress it. Hence immediately after Cæsar, Octavius Augustus prohibited the citizens from taking part in their sacred rites, as Suetonius mentions,¹ and after him again Tiberius Cæsar in the course of his reign, as Pliny² informs us, suppressed their religion, although again, according to Suetonius,³ Claudius almost effected its destruction because of its atrocious cruelty, and because it had been so strictly interdicted to the citizens in the time of Augustus. Suetonius is here confirmed by Aurelius Victor,⁴ who thus writes: “Then at the suggestion of good advisers vicious practices were repressed by him (Claudius), and throughout Gaul the infamous superstitions of the Druids.” This apparent contradiction the incomparable Lipsius⁵ has endeavoured to reconcile by supposing that Tiberius had driven the Druids from the city only, whereas Claudius had extirpated them in Gaul as well—and in this view of the matter M. Vossius⁶ has now expressed his concurrence. But the conjecture seems to have more probability in its

¹ Ibid.

² Hist. Mard., Book xxx., c. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ In Claudius.

⁵ In notes to Annals of Tacitus, Book xii.

⁶ Idolol., Book i. c. 35.

favour, which is advanced by P. Pithoeus,¹ Levinus, Torrentius² and others, who contend that both the Emperors had suppressed that execrable mode of worship in which it was thought right to offer a sacrifice of human victims, but that they had not completely suppressed it, but that vestiges of the cruel system which had been abolished still remained, as Mela³ shows, and perhaps broke out afresh afterwards. For in no such easy fashion can the inveterate use and wont of a people be abolished; nor can the mere force of an interdict against an old religion eradicate from men, all in a trice, and just at the moment it is proclaimed, all the love and regard for that old religion. And it will be no difficult matter to prove this from works on history, for in writers of a later period one may read of this superstition as still surviving, not in Britain only, but in all parts of Gaul, as is quite manifest from Lampridius,⁴ Vopiscus,⁵ Tacitus,⁶ Eusebius,⁷ and others. But on this occasion it happened that when many were thrust out from their home in

¹ *Advers. Subsec.*, Book i., c. 3.

² *Ad Sucton.*

³ *De Sit. Orb.*, Book iii.

⁴ *In Alexander.*

⁵ *In Aurelianu.*

⁶ *In the life of Agricola.*

⁷ *De Præpar. Evang.*, Book iv.

Gaul they emigrated to the countries adjacent, and chiefly to Germany itself, as Aventinus¹ distinctly avers. "The Emperor Tiberius," such are his words, "from every part of Gaul expelled the Druids who were the philosophers and priests of the people of that country. Their sacred wood was cut down, and thereupon they crossed over the Rhine into Germany." Celtes² bears him out here, using expressions almost identical, to which the reader is referred. But as regards the time at which they were at length utterly exterminated both in Britain and in Germany, scarcely any author we are acquainted with gives any information. For when, after the time of Constantine the Great, the Roman Empire was reduced to a state of miserable confusion, the Barbarians continually ravaging the Western Empire, and especially, of course, the different provinces of Gaul, the Druids and their religion remained unnoticed, while in the Eastern Empire there was no writer who had either the desire or the power to say anything about them: because when war was ripe all over Gaul nobody, perhaps, knew anything for certain regarding them. Celtes³ asserts that in the days of the Carlovingian Kings,

¹ *An. Buj.*, Book ii., in *Tiber.*

² *In Descript. Norimb.*, c. 3.

³ In the passage cited.

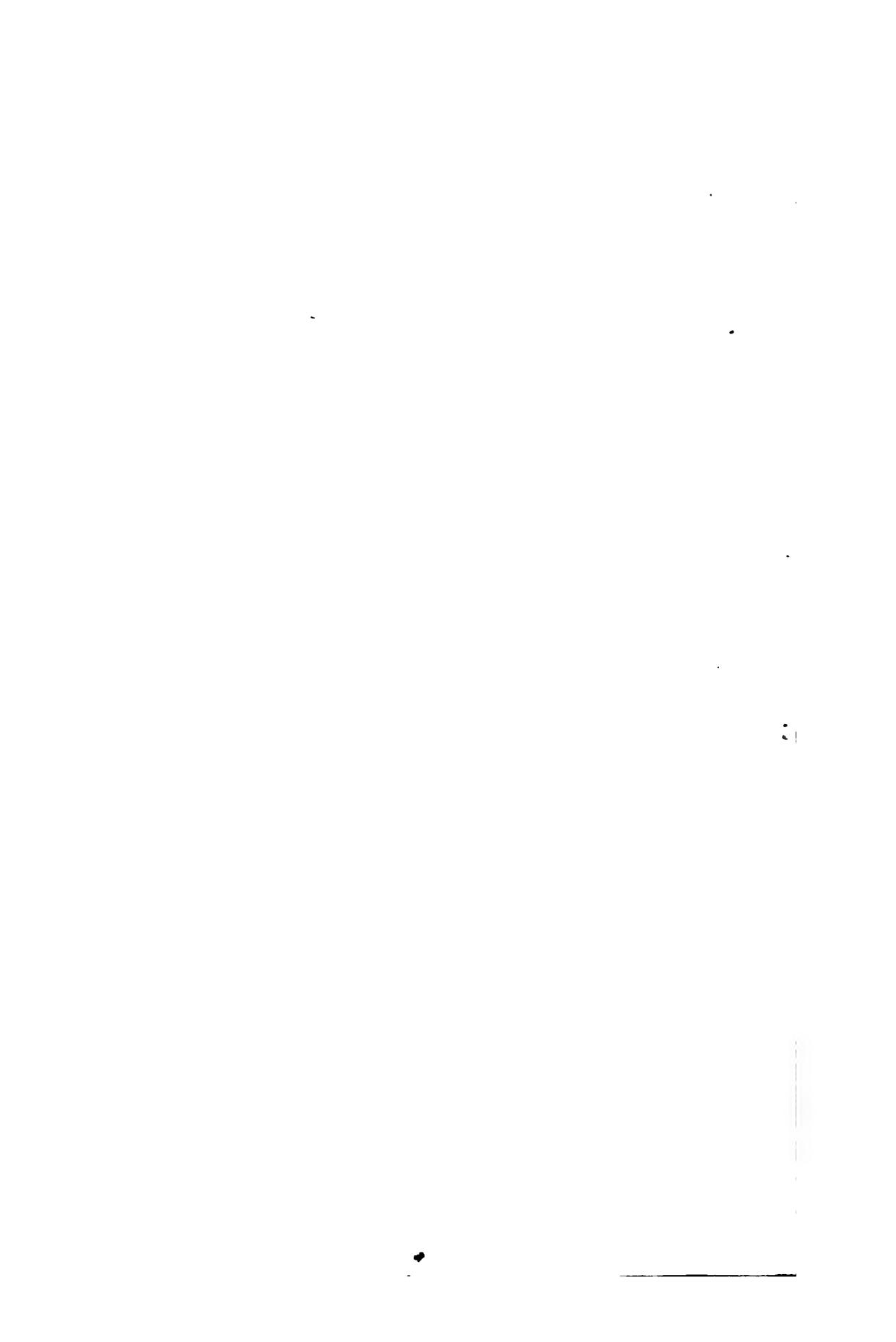
Arnolphus and the two Ottos, they occupied the whole of Hercynia, where they were engaged in teaching the Christian religion. "They inhabited," he says, "pleasant valleys where the forests abounded with wild-boar and deer, and where they lived under aged and black oaks, from which their community borrowed its name." The same writer further adds: "These men have grown so rich and opulent that they are not inferior to our kings and princes, whether you consider their luxury or their military power. When they had acquired still greater wealth and more cities, they aspired to conjoin with dynastic rulers, and so, having thrown off the yoke of religious austerity and discarded the cowl which they still wore, at stated times of the year they began to live in the freer fashion of ordinary mortals.

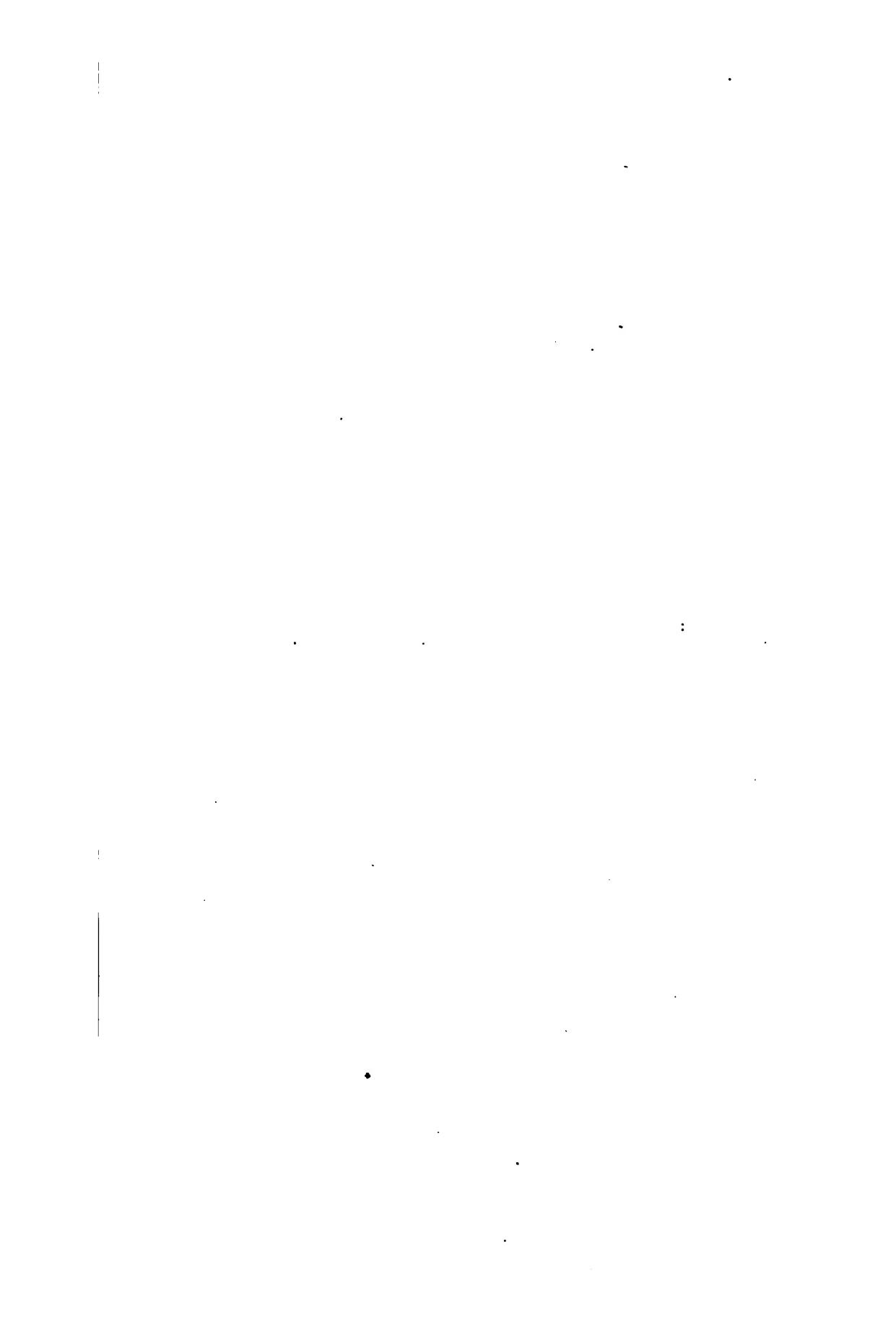
Now if anyone votes in favour of these views, we object not, nor do we object if he black-balls them, seeing that it is doubtful whether they can be confirmed by trustworthy evidence. And so here ends our brief dissertation about the Druids. We might have treated the subject at greater length, and perhaps with more entertainment to the reader, if we had crammed in anyhow whatever came in the way, if we had chosen, so to speak, to sweep everything, dust and all, into our corn chest. But such work may be left to those who have a fancy for it. We for our part deprecating

alike the biting sarcasm of the satirist with his obtrusive nose, and the application of too severe a rule of criticism, gladly make our exit from these groves and these oak forests, and lest anyone should be able with reason to complain of the scantiness of our matter, in taking our leave we scatter for gleaning these small grapes :—

A habit is composed of single actions,
In former times he was thought to be the more
respectable who went to anyone's left hand
than he who went to his right.
The ordeal by fire and by water formerly in use
among the Britons and Saxons has now-a-days
very properly fallen into disrepute.
Even the Deity is subject to predication.
A magistracy can be thrust upon one even against
one's will.
The rule of man over man is natural,
Cain must be said to have killed Abel with a stone
rather than with a club.

Finis.







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